



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

WHAT IS THE OBJECT OF THE STUDY OF LATIN IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS?

BY E. C. GREENE
The Baldwin School, Bryn Mawr

Everyone who heartily believes in the usefulness of Latin in secondary schools must regret the diversities of opinion which at present make us appear a house divided against itself. There are many who would put the question which forms our title as a purely rhetorical one; but even that fact is not so serious a menace to classical study as the different and contradictory answers which would be given by its friends. One must wish either that one party might succeed in convincing all the rest, or else that some reconciling, unifying point of view might be found. One's best hope of finding such a point of view would seem to lie in a dispassionate—if possible, a sympathetic—examination of the answers that are at present given to our question. They are apparently four, and represent the chief end of Latin in the secondary school as (1), discipline, especially in the line of syntax; (2) historical and archaeological information—knowledge of the ancient world; (3) culture—literary appreciation and enjoyment; (4) the help given to English by a knowledge of Latin, and especially by the exercise of translation.

The first thesis—that Latin is chiefly to be studied at this stage for the discipline which its syntax affords—is at present unpopular and more often attacked than defended. Its possible absurdities and abuses have been exhibited to superfluity. It remains, however, a very strong position. Discipline is one of our crying educational needs. Dr. Münsterberg tells us that our young students master nothing thoroughly. “Mr Dooley,” covering depths of sagacity under a jest, does not care what we teach the children “so long as it is *onplisant* to them.” Much may be said for the discipline of syntax from quite a different point of view. Mrs. Alice Meynell, writing in the *Atlantic Monthly* on a purely literary subject, says:

Security of grammar is surely much more than a mere correctness and knowledge of the rules of a language. It is strength, it is logic. It even proves imagination, because loose sentences nearly always imply vagueness of image—visual and mental uncertainty. . . . Strong grammar is like strong drawing, and proves a capable grasp of the substance of things.

But perhaps the fact which gives syntax its surest foothold in Latin study is the impossibility of getting away from it. Thrust it out as you please, *tamen usque recurret*. We shall not escape from syntax or from the disciplinary element in our Latin work, unless we also effect an escape from the Latin language, or at least give up the hope of mastering it. Meantime all of us, willingly or unwillingly, must be much occupied with syntax. The extremists in this direction are gone or going, and something like general agreement has been reached on one point—that the study of syntax must prove itself serviceable to reading—that our students parse in order to read, and write Latin in order to read it.

The second point of view regards Latin, even in the preparatory school, as above all else a valuable medium for the study of the ancient world out of which our own has so largely been formed. The study of Latin, it has been finely said, gives opportunity “to know the human spirit in one of its greatest incarnations.” The widening of a boy’s or girl’s horizon to include even a little of that far-distant part—that world so like our own and so different from it—is surely a great end to achieve. It is possible, however, from this point of view to run into great excesses and absurdities, and as even these excesses at present find admirers, it will not be out of place to give one or two instances. In one of our best school editions of Caesar, students are informed in their first chapter—almost their first sentence—that the Belgae were “probably of the Cymric branch of the Celtic race,” the Celtae “of the Gaelic branch,” that “the language of the Aquitani was Basque, of the Gauls proper, Celtic, of the Belgians, another dialect of Celtic mixed with German.” One may have chanced also to meet young students imperfectly versed in Latin who have, however, worn togas, reclined at Roman banquets, and helped to elect a full list of Roman officials. The whole question here seems to be one of proportion; of balance. It is not the intrinsic value of this sort of study that is called into question;

but its relation to the study of Latin in secondary schools. If this Latin merely serves as a starting-point for "illustrative work"—if it is to be merely a peg to hang all this information upon—it seems at least questionable whether any subject should be studied under the name of Latin in which the language is a hindrance rather than a help. Could not some courses of this sort be conducted more profitably *without* the Latin? It will be said at once that this is not so—that all the illustrative work that can be given is not equivalent to that direct contact of minds furnished by reading—that we cannot dispense with the language and the literature. With this view surely experience is in accord. If then the ability to read Latin furnishes one with so great an advantage, so real a point of contact with the ancient world, should we not, for our young students, press this hard-won advantage of theirs to the utmost? Must we not make sure that our illustrative work really illustrates and does not stray too far afield—that our history really serves as a background—in short, as we said just now of syntax, must not study of this sort, if done as part of the Latin course, show itself serviceable to the *reading*, and justify, limit, and regulate itself from that point of view?

The statement that Latin is to be studied for the sake of the literature makes the strongest possible appeal to all lovers of literature in general and of Latin literature in particular. We must all be agreed as to the desirableness of doing just this. Yet it cannot be said that this claim, in its extreme form at least, is not antagonistic to the others which we have been considering. For it is said—often vehemently said—that we, by our insistent drill, our dry-as-dust erudition, etc., etc., prevent or destroy literary appreciation. These dusty spider-webs of ours, it is said

. . . . o'ershroud stars and roses,
 Cherub and trophy and garland.
 Nothings grow something which quietly closes
 Heaven's earnest eye. Not a glimpse of the far land
 Gets through our comments and glozes.

This is perhaps the most serious accusation which we as Latin teachers have to meet. But surely a much more potent cause is at work here than our errors of method or judgment—namely, our students' ignorance of the language. A veil is over their eyes which increasing

knowledge must gradually remove. At first their attention is absorbed by the difficult process of reading. Also they read far too little at a time for sustained interest. The joy that is to be had in the Caesar year—and it is a real and a worthy joy—is that of gaining power over a difficult subject. This is succeeded by those “undreamt-of satisfactions,” to use Dr. Münsterberg’s phrase, which are felt when the mind begins to move freely in so novel a medium of thought as Latin. Real literary appreciation begins or may begin with real reading. The imaginative get inspiring glimpses and foreshadowings of it very early, but no amount of imagination can lift the veil of ignorance wholly. The subject of the possibilities of literary study in secondary-school Latin, its limitations and hindrances, and the relation it bears to each author, is interesting to the point of fascination; but one example must suffice here. The chances for literary enjoyment are of course decidedly the greatest in Virgil. Some students feel a sort of fascination in it from the first, but the difficulties of the language, the strangeness of it all, divert a good deal of attention. Hard thorough study, leading to something like mastery of these difficulties, even though it seems to make a *corpus vile* of the first book, soon begins to show the lovely fruits of that increasing ease in reading which sets the mind free to enjoy. The thorny hedge around the enchanted palace has been broken down. If we refuse this irksome task, we may sit down on the grass outside the hedge very much at our ease, but we shall get only far-off glimpses of the palace and never properly enter it at all. Reading Latin as literature implies first *learning to read it*.

The services of Latin to English have undoubtedly been great. In the days when English literature was neglected in schools, boys sometimes got their first literary inspirations from their Latin and Greek. Now that English grammar is the neglected subject, Latin has valiantly shouldered that burden. Its possible helpfulness to an English vocabulary need not be suggested. However, the question of translation and its relation to English is a more intricate one. It may fairly be asked whether the sort of translation we often see in schools is not a menace to English rather than a help, and whether our translation at this stage is on the whole successful enough to claim much gratitude in any direction. We teachers may of course substi-

tute better translations of our own, and our pupils may to some extent accept and adopt our better version. But the success thus attained is too much like the retouched drawings of the pupils of a certain type of drawing-master happily now extinct. Insistent criticism will accomplish something, but there is a cause to be removed before the effect will cease. Examine a number of these bad translations. Notice their similarity. They have the uniformity of a machine-made article. As a matter of fact, they *are* machine-made; they are the result of a mechanical process which deserves a more careful analysis than it can receive here; they are translations made without reading the original. Much experiment has strengthened this conviction. A better reading will produce results in translation which weeks of mere criticism, though backed up by example and illustration, seemed powerless to effect. Our pupils must *read* before their translation will amount to much.

It has not been possible to keep out of sight my own point of view—that the immediate concrete object of secondary-school work in Latin is to teach the student to read, and that, regarded from this point of view, the larger and remoter objects of the work are no longer antagonistic and can no longer put forth excessive or exclusive claims. For learning to read *is* discipline, and requires among other things a competent grasp of syntax, though not the excess of it which might be inflicted upon the student if syntax were studied for its own sake. And intelligent reading implies enough illustrative work to bring out the meaning of the authors read, though it does not imply substituting a course in history or archaeology for one in Latin. All our hopes for the culture element in our work depend upon our success in teaching our students to read, and likewise all our hopes of such effective work in translation as will prove a help to English. A course in Latin which really accomplished this immediate object—which really taught the student to read his Latin intelligently—might justly contend that it provided the boy or girl with admirable discipline, enlarged his mental horizon, gave him some glimpses at least of a rare and fine culture, and put him into fuller possession of his mother-tongue. To teach young students to read Latin intelligently is not easy; but if we fail to attempt it, we are abandoning our citadel.